

The Teacher's Prologue

Upon my hand is a task I set
to summarize a bookish text

And make clearer the history from which is sprung
the tales of one of Christ's good sons

This act I welcome with not much flair
as a common mind I harbor there

I fetter myself out of servitude
with risk of coming off absurd

I do so and appeal for your empathy –
my brain has fallen as from a tree

I offer you this simple 'lude,
you of greater pulchritude

And hope you glean from my reward
a stronger insight much further toward

The knowing of things of such importance
as that which is needed for your comportment

I do so alongside the singing of song
with presumption that you'll take kindly to singing along

I do so with reminders that my example may be folly
but someone must take such a small chance, by golly

Someone must show that it's all right to tell stories
as imperfect as weasels and damsels and glory

As flawed as can be and as right as His word
yet both at the same time? Now that IS absurd.

The Teacher's Tale

To sum up this part of England's past politic
I begin with what happened in one thousand sixty-six

I throw into discussion a triple inheritance of throne
after Edward was dead and his body was bone

Which resulted in slaughter so sanguine, so wild
and ultimately ended in French rule of the Isle

Whereby all of the land mass and animals on it
were owned by a William so sorely admonished

His centralization of power was bleak
and continued with his two sons until Stephen, the meek

Finally, Henry the Second ruled well –
“Plantagenet” ended Feudalism but let chivalry swell

He did have a nemesis, though, for a time
Archbishop Becket who died on his dime

And Henry had sons, Richard and John
the latter who was usurped and forced to sign on

To the great Magna Carta from which our laws evolved
including representatives and trials to be solved

I urge you to read on and study as you must
the glorious rest of this historic rust

Alas, we edge forward to the recordings of words
in sermons and rhymes that come not in thirds

But in iambic pentameter and ballads, I guess
though ballads came later than Chaucer’s great mess

To make certain you know how literature grew
I won’t attempt to taint what you knew

I will instead meander onward into my own
imagination of Chaucer’s literary drone

I will write in his style though clearly much worse
but what’s one to care as there’s even worse verse

Traversing from history to literature, which is fun
I share a new story about an old fight t’was won

About a man and a beast and a chivalrous endeavor
The man beat the beast in an unlikely manner

More I shall tell you if you make yourself warm
and rest your left mind and invoke only charm

Here is a succinct Arthurian tale
about a particular fight between a man and a snail

"But why a small, silly snail?" you may say
Well, it's a creature whose time is both then and today

Its haughtiness has been revered and extolled and reviled
by the rich and the poor and the aptly beguiled

It's an animal so soft and then bam! very splat
which functions as metaphor for mankind who is daft

It is also a motif as advanced as the ages
from before William Shakespeare put his voice on the stages

And even before Chaucer graced his incomplete page
with rhymes instead of alliteration for the young hearty sage

The snail is a symbol of all that is weak
yet strong in his ability to be ever in peak

To sustain through the years
like red wine and bright cheer

Like the roots of an oak and the branches of asp
except not in individual form just like that

More like a collaborative legacy has the snail
with each one adding to the overall scale

Dying in a flash like every good writer
leaving in its wake the soft residue of the fighter.

The Snail Fighter's Tale

The man set on down to put on his shoes
to set off to see her, to give her the news

That King Arthur has asked him to work in his garden
to tend to the arbors whose boughs were forgotten

He laid down his booties, not noticing him there
this yellowy creature right next to his chair

He thought not much of it and continued to tie
while thinking of nothing but her temperament shy

He anticipated her serenity as he approached her broad door
as he bowed before her and asked her to explore

A courtship so fine, as no other she'd known
He couldn't wait to see if she'd approve of his tone

But while he was dreaming about her in fine weather
the creature moved sideways and onto his leather

He ambled right onto the part that's now tongue
and refused to budge off despite being slung

The man couldn't get the snail off of his boot
He tried and he tried, but the effort was moot

Now he was late and she wouldn't be tolerant
of a bloke without time to be present and moderate

The testing of his patience was next on the list
after sitting and tying and slinging his fist

If he could pass it, he just might prove worthy
of courtship and marriage with this woman so girthy

He sat and he waited and he watched and he whistled
He twiddled his fingers and counted the thistles

He stared down the exo-shell of this almighty wizard
who stood stubbornly between this man and his vision

Finally, after a spell he laid prayer
to the omniscient leader he'd hoped might dwell near

Now, if it was Jesus or just the snail's hunger
that urged the snail off of his boot-numbing slumber

No one will know, but I can say for certain
that when he got there, she threw open her curtains

She played no notice of either tardiness or haste
She claimed the belief that love shouldn't go to waste

But really she noticed on his boot some soft slime
that the man had not seen as the sun made him blind

Apparently upon leaving, the man and the snail,
the snail moved too slowly, and well you know the drill

The man had not known what knightly deed he had done;
all that he noticed was her heart he had won

Also, he knew that he was grateful for work
of jousting with snails in Arthur's garden in York

When he was working, he sang this fine tune
Please sing along if you've a penchant to croon:

I've been working on the snail code
All the live-long day

I've been working on the snail code
Just to pass the time away

Can't you smell the thistle blowing and
rising up biennial in the yard?

Can't you see the garden growing
when the snail shells are no longer hard?

Snail, won't you go,
Snail, won't you go,
Snail, won't you go away –ay –ay?

Snail, won't you go,
Snail, won't you go,
Snail, won't you go away?

Garden won't you grow,
Garden, won't you grow
Garden, won't you grow –ow –ow –ow –ow?

Garden won't you grow,
Garden, won't you grow
Garden, won't you grow my way?

The Teacher's Epilogue

I play for you an instrument from way before Chaucer
right beside melodies from after his proffers

I bless you with these not just to flank
but to help you remember my own lowly rank

We are all like him and like us and like me
We are all on a pilgrimage to be both fettered and free

To serve others including our own guilty pleasures
and to bestow upon the heavens His and our earthly treasures

I hope you've enjoyed this edifying turn
for in teaching it to you, it is I who have learned.